



## An Interview with Ptolemy Tompkins

by David Stang, MTS, JD

Ptolemy Tompkins is the principal author of *Proof of Angels: The Definitive Book on the Reality of Angels and the Surprising Role They Play in Each of Our Lives*. He was the collaborator for the production of the best-selling book, *Proof of Heaven* and co-author of *Map of Heaven*, *The Divine Life of Animals*, and *The Modern Book of the Dead*. His late father, Peter Tompkins, was also a writer and author of the best seller *The Secret Lives of Plants*.

As a boy, Ptolemy acquired some of his initial fascination with the otherworldly realms by accompanying his father on several trips to the Bahamas in search for ruins of the lost colony of Atlantis. As an adult, he authored *The Beaten Path*, a book which chronicles his adventures growing up with a Buddhist for stepbrother and explores the differences between Buddhism and Christianity. Later, for just under ten years, he was editor and writer at *Guideposts* and *Angels on Earth* magazines. His writing has appeared in numerous other magazines as well, including *The New York Times Magazine*, *Harper's*, and *Time*. Tompkins's shorter writings are often selected for re-publication in the annual edition of *Best Spiritual Writing*.

He appears in the 2014 film *Monk with a Camera*, which chronicles the life of his stepbrother Nicholas Vreeland, the first Westerner to become Abbott of a Tibetan Buddhist monastery. Tompkins lives in Nyack, New York, with his wife, Colleen Hughes, editor of *Angels on Earth*, and two of his three stepdaughters.

One unique and admirable feature of Tompkins's writing style is his penchant for amplifying nearly each of his major contentions by using italics to highlight a word or phrase, much like a composer would employ the fortissimo symbol. With no intended insult toward him, it is my perception that in every book he has ever written he has marshaled his arguments with the advocacy skill of a lawyer who earns his living by arguing landmark cases before the United States Supreme Court. I recently put some questions to him by email, most of which pertain to his most recent book, *Proof of Angels*.

*What led you to conclude that angels can be dressed in white robes or three-piece suits and that what makes them angels is not what they wear but the fact that they are spiritual beings who break into our world to tell us something?*



Tompkins

"I concluded this because a) those are the facts of the matter; that is, angels appear in totally conventional get-ups, — halos and so forth, and also in any manner of other outfits, and b) because this makes sense if you accept the notion, as I do, that perception is in large part a constructive affair. That is, we build the world we see around us much more than we are aware. Philosopher/researchers like the French student of Islam Henry Corbin posited, following the lead of Frederic Myers, that in the worlds 'above' this one, perception is an even more personal and constructive affair than it is here. In the *Mundus Imaginalis*, the inter-world between earth and God which Islamic mysticism postulates, we perceive a real world that is at the same time highly personal. Angels, in my view, are emissaries from this world-above-the-world, and hence can appear in strikingly different ways depending on who's seeing them. Yet they do this without being purely 'imaginary' beings. They are real, but they are personalized."

*You write that the existence of angels drives home the fact that we are not lost and alone in this modern flatland of materialism, but come from, and will return to, another, better place. That is the most important message that the angel brings in our time – or any time – and limiting all the evidence of this to the brain is a popular, but ultimately losing, proposition. Can you expand upon this assertion in rebutting the materialists' belief that the human brain is the sole creator of all consciousness and thought?*

"I don't like the word 'rebut.' It's too legal and aggressive for me. But I think that the evidence that the brain is not the creator of consciousness is so overwhelming now that only someone with a truly dogmatic mindset can dismiss it all with a clean conscience. 'Consciousness' is a horribly overused word, but the fact remains that what David Chalmers called the 'hard problem' of consciousness is just

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# Reflecting Light

Rick Darby

## Where or When

Popular songs about reincarnation or survival? They are rare, but I can think of two examples.

The first whose beneath-the-surface subject is reincarnation is the classic "Where or When" by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart (1937). The lyrics open like this:

**It seems we stood and talked like this before  
We looked at each other the same way then  
But I can't remember where or when  
The clothes you're wearing are the clothes you  
wore  
The smile you are smiling you were smiling then  
But I can't remember where or when.**

Hart, the lyricist, expressed poetically what many people have experienced once in a while. Especially in love or infatuation, there is a haunting sense of meeting someone that is more like a re-meeting, a resumption of a relationship that isn't bound to the here and now.

Most varieties of occultism, and even one of the world's major religious traditions (Hinduism), say that when we leave the physical body at death our soul or spirit continues on a more rarefied plane, and after an inter-life period selects another body to be born into.

According to this belief, "new" individuals retain hidden memories of previous incarnations and so-called karmic attachments to the souls of people they were involved with in those past lives. Relationships established with them are not stamped "paid." The give-and-take normally has to be worked out in succeeding lives.

Do we know this for a fact? No. Does evidence for it exist? Yes.

Many people summon up apparent past life memories under hypnosis. This kind of evidence should be approached with caution; hypnosis is usually a state of extreme suggestibility. Unless care is taken, they may make up stories based on what they think the hypnotist expects to hear. Serious researchers avoid leading the witness. Some subjects who undergo hypnotic sessions are flooded with enthusiasm to find out about their past lives and, therefore, perhaps dramatize unconscious fantasies.

Case studies of past-life recall, such as those most associated with the late Dr. Ian Stevenson, also imply reincarnation.

**Some things that happen for the first time  
Seem to be happening again  
And so it seems that we have met before  
And laughed before  
And loved before  
But who knows where or when**

A more recent example is the title song from Van Morrison's 1968 album, *Astral Weeks*. Most people of my generation can remember "Astral Weeks" and its musical arrangement, as the album was widely played. It was released at the height of the mystical-psychedelic period, when Eastern religions were all the rage and the silvery complex sounds of the sitar sprinkled background music for the era. Nevertheless, I can think of no other song from those years with such a flavor of the paranormal.

**To lay me down  
In silence easy  
To be born again  
To be born again  
From the far side of the ocean  
If I put the wheels in motion  
And I stand with my arms behind me  
And I'm pushin' on the door  
Could you find me?**

And a few lines later:

**Lay me down  
In silence easy  
To be born again  
To be born again  
To be born again  
In another world  
In another world  
In another time  
Got a home on high**

What does it matter if a couple of songwriters each went through an otherworldly jag on one occasion? Perhaps not much, except as a hint that we sense more than we think we know. Hart and Morrison, who (unlike, say, Yeats) were not noted for any metaphysical interests, nevertheless seemed to be intuitively open to the call of "another world," "another time." So may the rest of us be — regardless of how non-psychic we consider ourselves — but who can foretell where or when?

# President's Message: On Being Alive & Aware

*The dearest things in life cannot be owned  
but only shared.*

— Mark Nepo

I have shared with readers of *The Searchlight* quotations and words that resonate deeply, striking ancient chords within. "The Book of Awakening," by Mark Nepo, published in the year 2000, contains many. It is an intimate sharing that chronicles Mark's journey of recovery from a life-threatening disease to wholeness, and to a deeper understanding of what it means to be alive and aware. The author describes his book as a "companion" and as a "soul friend." It is much more than that. Rather than ruminate on one or two of Mark's numinous word groupings, I would rather "share" some which may find resonance with your True Self.



- It is the ground of heart, where we all meet.
- ...the nature of becoming is a constant filming over where we begin, while the nature of being is a constant erosion of what is not essential.
- ...as water smoothes stone and enters sand, we become each other.
- When I look deep enough into you, I find me...
- ...that unexpected wholeness that is more than each of us, but common to all – that moment of unity is the atom of God.
- ...the best chance to be whole is to love whatever gets in the way, until it ceases to be an obstacle.
- Truth is the corrective story of how we return to exactly who we are.
- ...compassion ... is the never-ending story of how we embrace each other and forgive ourselves for not accepting our beautifully particular place in the fabric of all there is
- Slowness remembers and hurry forgets; that softness remembers and hardness forgets, that surrender remembers and fear forgets.
- ...accepting the demand of the sacred that we treat everything that comes our way as special.
- ...the simplicity of spirit that arises from unencumbered being.
- ...an unbreakable emptiness at the heart of all seeing from which all living things emerge.
- The life of spirit is everywhere: in dust waiting for life, in music waiting to be heard, in the sensations of the day waiting to be felt.
- Here is always beneath there.

• The doorway of our next step of growth is always behind the urgency of now.

• In release, we begin.

• Our job ... is to unfold what is already in us.

• ... everything is connected by a small piece of beginning.

• God is everywhere and the extraordinary is waiting quietly beneath the skin of all that is ordinary.

• ... in the numinous love that ancient stone emanate if we are still enough to bow to them.

• Patience is the gift that waits beneath our very human agitation.

• Enlightenment is the experience, the feeling of Oneness of All Life, more than the putting on of wisdom.

• Most things break instead of transform because they resist.

• One of the most difficult things for us to accept is that beneath all our dreams and disappointments, we live and breathe in abundance.

• ... enlightenment is the moment we realize that we are made of love ... we are already a part of where we are going.

• The living terrain of relationship...

• Beneath what I try to see is all I need.

• ... the infinite coherence of all things and events ... is the sacred luminosity we experience as grace.

• The sacred moment and God are always the same.

• Happiness can simply be described as the satisfaction we feel when we are in ultimate accord, however briefly, in being and doing.

• ... where the very pace of creation breathes.

• ... the deepest sufferings of the heart and spirit cannot be solved, only witnessed and held.

• Feeling our tenderness, we can learn from the caterpillar how to endure the tremble that precedes the appearance of wings.

To paraphrase Mark's beautiful and breathtaking metaphor on the capturing of the feeling of tenderness, I ask that you share the butterfly's *trembling* "that precedes the appearance of wings" with those you hold most dear.

— William E. Wilson, J.D.

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## What is the Point of it All?

"If we are fated to live our brief lives and then perish, leaving nothing behind except memories in the minds of a few friends and family members who will also perish, in a world that will eventually turn to ashes in an extinguished cosmos, then what is it all for? That was the thought that nagged at me."

— Michael Prescott



## Searchlight Media Watch



Tom and Lisa Butler, NST

**Survey Shows How People Connect to Faith on Mobile Devices:** In a survey sponsored by AT&T, 4-in-10 (41%) respondents said they use a mobile phone, tablet or laptop to connect to faith-based organizations or inspiration sites. The survey found that among those who attend services regularly, 1-in-4 (25%) report using a mobile device as part of that experience.



The use of mobile technology to connect with faith differs among ethnic groups. Blacks are more likely to use technology to connect with their faith. The study found that 57% of blacks use mobile devices to connect to faith and inspiration sites and groups. That compares to 46% of Hispanics, 38% of Asians and 37% of whites.

People using mobile devices in faith practices say they:

- Listen to or download music (42%)
- Stream services (38%)
- Research or study (32%)
- Access holy or song books (29%)
- Keep up with religious holidays/holy days (28%)
- Give (24%)
- Use prayer/meditation apps (22%)
- Use faith/self-improvement apps (19%)
- Keeping up with dietary guidelines (10%)

Across all groups, 72% of those who use mobility to connect with their faith report using social media to do so, with Facebook and YouTube used most.

From: "Survey Shows How People Connect to Faith On Mobile Devices," from AT&T, *PR Newswire*, prnewswire.com.

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**Being Social and Living Longer:** One of the most dependable, universal means to greater health and happiness is to simply socialize more. According to research, spending most of your time alone and feeling lonely increase the risk of dying by 30 percent! This is true even for those who say they prefer to be alone. In fact, according to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, loneliness can be as bad for you as a smoking habit. Yes, loneliness and social isolation are in the same category as smoking 15 cigarettes a day or being obese.

In fact, our social lives are better predictors of how long we will live than our eating and exercise habits. That said, choose your friends well. The quantity of social interaction is only half of the prescription. Quality matters too. The sort of people we hang out with has an enormous and immeasurable benefit not only on how happy we are, but also on how fat or even lonely we are. Surround yourself with people who have a positive influence on your life. According to one study, joining a group that meets even once a month produces the same happiness as doubling your income!



From: "Don't Cancel Your Dinner Plans: A Science-Backed Reason to Be Social" by Samantha Boardman MD, 25 July 2015, [huffingtonpost.com/samantha-boardman-md/social-health\\_b\\_7834956.html](http://huffingtonpost.com/samantha-boardman-md/social-health_b_7834956.html)

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**Final Words Project:** Lisa Smartt, a poet and linguist, became fascinated by the beautiful, weird, cryptic words of the dying during her father's last days in 2012. "I can't reach, Jack," he said. "My modality is broken." And, "There is so much so in sorrow." And, the one that stunned her, because he was not a religious man: "Lisa, you were right about the angels!" She started the Final Words Project to collect other departing thoughts that people sent her. By nature, it was not scientific. These were anecdotes, words that relatives had taken the time to record and had deemed meaningful.

Her project, though, has spawned a study based at Montgomery County's Bryn Athyn College that will record the words – all of them – of people dying at home in the care of hospice. The goal is to analyze how communication changes in the last six weeks of life, in order to make the process less mysterious – and frightening – to family members and medical providers.

From: *Study aims to decode final words of the dying* by Stacey Burling, *Philly.com*, September 2015, [articles.philly.com/2015-09-28/news/66932661\\_1\\_bryn-athyn-college-study-language](http://articles.philly.com/2015-09-28/news/66932661_1_bryn-athyn-college-study-language)

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**Spiritual Experiences:** In a first for New Zealand, a study will look at spiritual experiences that can't be explained by science, including the

well-documented near-death experience. Massey University senior lecturer in counseling and guidance with the Institute of Education, Karen Frewin, is conducting the study with international near-death experience expert Natasha Tassell-Matamua.

Any kind of spiritual experience, including out-of-body, past-life experiences or even deep meditations are included in the study. Frewin says that “People might think these experiences are weird and not talk about them. We want to know how they integrate the experience into their lives. Studies have shown that therapists feel ill-equipped to deal with people who presented with matters relating to spirituality. There is no training on spirituality for psychologists or counselors in formal training programs.”

From: *Spiritual experiences that change lives* by Susan Teodoro, September 2015, Manawatu Standard, stuff.co.nz/manawatu-standard/news/71911160/spiritual-experiences-that-change-lives

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**NDE's Change Lives:** At the University of Virginia, a space is given to the scientific investigation of phenomena that challenge currently accepted scientific assumptions. Such phenomena include extrasensory perception (such as telepathy), apparitions and deathbed visions, poltergeists, experiences of persons who come close to death and survive (usually called near-death experiences), out-of-body experiences, and claimed memories of previous lives.

Dr. Bruce Greyson is one of the several scientists who work in the Universities Division of Perceptual Studies (DOPS), and his specialty is near-death experiences. Dr. Greyson says “As a psychiatrist, what’s much more interesting to me is not the ‘knock your socks off’ part of the near-death experience, but the after-effects, the way it changes people’s lives. Psychiatrists and psychologists spend a lot of hard work trying to get people to make fairly small changes, and here in the flash of a second, people are totally transformed.” One of the most profound effects Dr. Greyson has observed is a loss of the fear of death. No longer afraid of death, NDEers are also no longer afraid of living life to the fullest.

From Interview: Bruce Greyson on Researching Near-Death Experiences at the University of Virginia by Tara Maclsaac, Epoch Times, theepochtimes.com/n3/1368200-interview-bruce-greyson-on-researching-near-death-experiences-at-the-university-of-virginia/



### A Counseling Approach to Mediumship:

From the Abstract: In the last few decades there has been much corroborative research suggesting that exceptional experiences during bereavement lead to improved coping and a healthy recovery from a negative emotional state. Aside from spontaneous exceptional experiences and their impact on the bereaved, experiences such as mediumship can be an equally rewarding and positive experience for the bereaved. ... [research] Results suggest that those who experience mediumistic counseling produced a high sense of presence, resulting in adaptive coping. Additionally, the findings suggest that areas of counseling, clinical studies and positive psychology would benefit from forming links with the findings of parapsychological research, with regards to the bereaved and their experiences.

From: *A Counselling Approach to Mediumship: Adaptive outcomes of Grief Following an Exceptional Experience* by Rachel E. Evenden, Callum E. Cooper and Graham Mitchell, The University of Northampton, Centre for the Study of Anomalous Psychological Processes, academia.edu/16544976/A\_Counselling\_Approach\_to\_Mediumship

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**Does Being around Trees Help People Feel Good?** A 2015 study from the Centre for Research in Environmental Epidemiology (CREAL) in Barcelona, Spain found that children exposed to more greenery—as measured by satellite imagery of their schools and neighborhoods—demonstrated better attention skills and memory development. Another recent study published in the journal *Nature* combined satellite imagery, individual tree data, and health surveys from 31,109 residents of the greater Toronto, and found that people who live in areas with higher street tree density report better health perception compared with their peers living in areas with lower street tree density. Trees are known to improve air quality by capturing six common air pollutants and toxic gases: ground-level ozone, particulate matter, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide and lead. In fact, a single tree can absorb 10 pounds of air pollutants per year.



From: Scientific American by EarthTalk, 20 July 2015, scientificamerican.com/article/does-being-around-trees-help-people-feel-good/

## INTERVIEW

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as hard now as it ever has been. The brain's activities parallel the movements of consciousness, but that fact doesn't prove, or even remotely come close to showing, that the brain is the master and maker of interior identity. Stories of people experiencing consciousness beyond the physical body are so numerous that, to my mind at least, this sheer quantity invalidates the dismissive claim that these stories are merely 'anecdotal.' How many great scientific discoveries began with observations that were, at first, anecdotal? That we – so far – lack the ability to pin these experiences down and dissect them does not, in my opinion, mean that they are not real. There are just ... too ... many of them."

*How do you find the ability and courage to 'read' our individual spiritual experiences and to develop a truly common, truly across-all-borders way of speaking about them?*

"You find it through desperation. We cannot live forever in a cosmos where interiority isn't real. Doing so is in part – perhaps large part – responsible for the epidemic of depression that modern culture suffers from. Unless we learn to acknowledge the reality and lastingness of the interior, personal being, we will sink in a sea of despair. All this remains largely unacknowledged now, but like most unacknowledged truths, it will make its way further and further to the surface, until finally people will have no choice but to abandon materialism as a core experiential philosophy."

*You write: "We have a critical need not for signs and wonders, because we already have them. What we need is the faculty to open our minds and accept them. We need events that demonstrate that the spiritual world is real, that it is populated, and that it is watched over by a God who cares about us"? Please explain.*

"This is actually a paragraph I wish I'd taken one more look at before the book went to press, because in the third sentence I'm basically saying we need something that I just finished saying we *don't* need. What I'm getting at here is simply what I said above: the evidence is all around us. We don't need more of it. We need to learn to read it, to take it seriously, and to act from the fact that the spiritual world is real even though it's not on display under a glass case."

*Would you explain the helmet metaphor you utilize throughout "Proof of Angels" and how it is that when wearing one's helmet one sees only half the world with full and total clarity?*

"It's not the deepest thing in the world. I simply use the helmet metaphor to suggest that we filter out the spiritual world without realizing we

do so. But that occasionally, for most of us, this filter falls away and we catch a glimpse of the spiritual world we usually filter out. These glimpses can be very subtle, very fast, and we tend to forget them almost immediately. But most of us have had them, and we would benefit by working hard to remember them when we do. Or so, at least, I think."

*How does death figure into why the "existence of the spiritual world" is so "terrifying" and why do you assert that "neither science nor religion can save us from ... uncertainty?"*

"This world is terrifying. That comment doesn't need to be backed up. Most or all of us are afraid of death to some degree. Jung somewhere suggested that the single greatest human fear is hell. What I think he meant by that is that we all,



at least subconsciously, understand that our identity and our sense of ourselves as continuous beings, with thoughts and feelings that matter, depend on a machinery of some sort – either the machinery of the brain and body, or, if we are religious, of the soul. Either way, we count on the fact of order every second of our lives. What happens if that order should be robbed from us, either by death or by mental illness? This is a terrifying question. And for those who believe the world is a more than merely a physical place, that terror can continue even after we are dead. Indeed, it can, perhaps, intensify. Disorder is terrifying. The dissolution of identity is terrifying. And this is what death *is*, at least in its threatening/negative aspect. This terror is born of uncertainty, and only individual spiritual experience can truly cure one of these uncertainties. Or so (I'll add again) it seems to me."

*Another argument critics employ is that all reported spiritual phenomena are merely hallucinations arising out of mental disorders. Could that be another reason why Gertrude Rachel Levy's book "The Phoenix Nest" (which described her relationship to her Guardian Angel) was, as you described, "ignored and quickly forgotten"?*

"The word 'hallucination' is fast becoming an almost entirely useless word. The world is not divided into 'real' and 'imaginary,' any more than the color spectrum is divided into 'red' and 'blue.' Nothing we see around us lacks an element of subjectivity, and no 'hallucination,' whether it

takes place on a misty mountain top or a mental ward, lacks some element of genuine truth. The human encounter with both the inner and outer worlds takes place along a spectrum, and until we acknowledge that, 'hallucination' simply becomes one of those hot-button words used to dismiss whole realms of experience we aren't even close to full mapping or understanding. As for Levy, her book struck me as remarkable because it describes a life of mystical experience in the words of one of the greatest scholars of the twentieth century. Levy was a brilliant student of past cultures whose writings made a tremendous impact on our understanding of ancient history and prehistory. At the end of her life, she announced that she had spent the great majority of that life in contact with an invisible world. To ignore her book is easy (try finding a copy!), but it is also irresponsible. Her testimony is invaluable."

*In "The Modern Book of the Dead" you mention that – not unlike Gertrude Rachel Levy – a part of you is located out of your body, up in the sky and that it speaks to you with some frequency. Could that part of you also be characterized as a Guardian Angel, Spirit Guide or Higher Self?*

"Could be. I don't know. Michael Whiteman, however, did know, and while his series of books on the true architecture of the self and its relationship to the various sub-personalities that inhabit us, along with the higher, 'angelic' figures with whom we are also in contact, make for difficult reading, I believe the beginnings of truly sorting all of this out lie in his books. The human psyche is so much more fantastically complicated than we tend to be taught it is, and the spiritual worlds are so much larger, stranger, and more populated than even many of those who believe in these worlds think they are, that untangling what is a higher part of oneself and what is an 'outside' spiritual being is a task for the distant future."

#### New Members

Sharon Friedman - Laramie, WY

Dave King - Kirkland, WA

Jeffrey Marks - Mukilteo, WA

Margaret M. Moga, Ph.D. - Terre Haute, IN

Igor I. Sikorsky, Jr. - Unionville, CT



#### Transitions

Venerable Michael Perry - Durham, England.

Paul D. Biscop, Ph.D. - Victoria, Canada

*In both "The Modern Book of the Dead" and your "Proof of Angels" (in contrast to the opposing view, "Upon exhaling our last breath we totally cease to exist") you assert we are "beings on the way somewhere." Is that contention not a cornerstone of your identity?*

"Well, it is a cornerstone of my identity, if that's what you mean. I am a Westerner, and Westerners are beings of narrative. The idea that things are not an eternal circle but that the cosmos is an event with a beginning, middle, and end is at the very heart of my identity. That's one reason I think it's often facile when Westerners think they can shift religions and jump into Buddhism or Hinduism. It's possible, I imagine, but it's way harder than many people, and many writers, seem to think it is. We have our culture in ourselves very deeply, the way a plant has the soil it grew from within its body. You can't just step out of it because you don't like it. It's more complex."

*What are some of the most seminal books you have read with respect to developing your self-understanding and spiritual identity?*

"'Saving the Appearances' by Owen Barfield, 'Meditations on the Tarot' by Valentin Tomberg, a good dozen books by Nicholas Berdyaev, the work of the Hungarian Anthroposophist George Kuhlwind, 'I Am the Truth' by Michel Henry, 'The Supreme Adventure' by Robert Crookall, the works of Geraldine Cummins, the works of Mircea Eliade, 'The Country Beyond' by Jane Sherwood, the poetry of Tomas Tranströmer."

*What will your next book be about?*

"God."

### **A Twofold Creature**

"When the world becomes a physical place only, rather than a physical and spiritual/mental place, something strange immediately happens to people's inner experience of themselves, to their sense of what had until recently been known as their souls. For the vast majority of peoples over the vast majority of history (and prehistory), the human being has been understood to be at the very least a twofold creature. He possessed a physical body visible to all, but also an invisible spiritual body: one that contained the thoughts and emotions, and perhaps most important, was responsible for the mysterious but nonetheless very real sense of me-ness that each of us feels. This invisible spiritual body left the physical body temporarily each night during sleep, and left it permanently at death, when it voyaged to realms that, like the spiritual body itself, were not (at least most of the time) visible to physical eyes because they were of another, higher nature than the merely physical."

— Ptolemy Tompkins  
("The Modern Book of the Dead")

## Meet the Academy's Officers & Directors (eighth in a series)

# Stephen Hall: Exploring the Mysteries

"The entire realm of evolution, brain, mind and consciousness captured my interest from my teen years and on through college," Stephen Hall, a retired social worker and administrator now residing in Altamonte Springs, Florida, just north of Orlando, recalls his early attraction to the subjects that prompted him to join the Academy in 2002 and now serve on the its Board of Directors.

"An anthropology professor from my university, Dr. David E. Jones, extended my interests from mainstream science into parapsychology through his accounts and scholarly research into the role of shamans in native American tribes," he adds, going on to explain that Jones's 1979 book, *Visions of Time: Experiments in Psychic Archaeology*, introduced him to the study of psychics and mediums residing in the Spiritualist enclave known as Cassadaga, which is just north of where he now lives.

"My earliest paranormal interest was in the U.S. government's psychic spy program known as 'Stargate,' he further recalls. "I later visited the campus of the University of Arizona where Dr. Gary Schwartz invited scholars and skeptics to an on-stage debate on the veracity of evidence for the survival of consciousness after physical death and the accuracy of research mediums."

Stephen's introduction to the Academy came the following year, in 2002, when Schwartz was the keynote speaker at the Academy's annual conference at Rosemont College near Philadelphia. He is also a member of the Society for Scientific Exploration (SSE), the International Remote Viewing Association (IRVA), the mutual UFO Network (MUFON), Toward a Science of Consciousness (TSI, University of Arizona), the Association for Research & Enlightenment (ARE) and the Rhine Institute. He attends an average of four conferences a year, almost always attending the Academy's conferences. He also spent a week at Arthur Findlay College in England, which specializes in mediumship, taking the course, "Celebrate the Miracle," during 2012. "I just really enjoy blending all the mysteries that are discussed at these conferences and exploring them," he explains his motivation.

A graduate of the University of Central Florida with a BA in psychology, Stephen worked as a state children's social worker, a supervisor in a dependent children's care facility, an administrator in a public school system, and a technical support employee at a private, non-profit university, all under the Florida State retirement system. He also spent 20 years in the U. S. Navy, two years on active duty during the

Vietnam War on a WWII era submarine, the USS Trumpetfish, as a fire control petty officer, and then 18 years in the Navy Reserve.

Now single and having retired from full-time work in 2002 and part-time work in 2013, Stephen has more time to devote to his interest in paranormal subjects. He leads a pre-service discussion group called "Inquiring Minds" at his alma mater's Unitarian Universalist Society, serves on the board of a continuing education program known as L.I.F.E. (Leaning Institute for Elders) at the university, leads a philosophical discussion group known as Plato's Cave through Meetup.com, and recently organized a group called Saturday Night Madness and Metaphysics. In addition, he enjoys kayaking, biking, hiking, and exercising.

"It's only through direct personal contact with like-minded participants in organizations like those I belong to that one can fully explore the full range of personal experiences, theories, alternative research, and skeptical alternatives," he says.

Asked if he has had any paranormal experiences of his own, Stephen thought for a moment. "Well, I've had some successful remote viewing, at least enough to prove to myself that it is a real thing," he responded. "As for mediumship, I haven't levitated or anything like that, but I'm open to the idea of it all. I'm fascinated by the story of Joseph of Cupertino, who is said to have levitated quite high in the air in front of thousands of people."

When pressed for his beliefs in various phenomena, Stephen shook his head. "I don't really like the words 'believer' or 'non-believer,' he replied. "I tend to look at it on a sliding scale with 10 being absolute certainty. I'd put myself at 9.9 when it comes to remote viewing, but I'd have to think about it before giving numbers on other phenomena. I'm not sure I want to be pinned down. So much of it goes beyond hallucinations and the theories that the skeptics come up with, but there are the alternative explanations that are difficult to factor in there. It's the wonderful mystery of it all that makes it so interesting. I love exploring uncertainties."

— MET

### Not a Chemical Event

"I think our consciousness is not just a passive epiphenomenon carried along by the chemical events in our brain, but is an active agent forcing the molecular complexes to make choices between one quantum state and another. In other words, mind is already inherent in every electron..."

— Freeman Dyson



## Intriguing Evidence From the Past

### May King Keeps Her Promise

Founder of the Canadian Society for Psychical Research, Dr. John Sumpter King (1843 - 1921), a Toronto physician, detailed his psychical research in a 1920 book, *Dawn of the Awakened Mind*, describing much in the way of both veridical physical and mental mediumship.

Beginning on November 12, 1911, 44 days after the death of his wife, May, King had four sittings with Detroit medium Etta Wriedt, referred to by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle as the best direct-voice medium in the world. He was immediately greeted by the voice of Dr. Sharp, Wriedt's primary spirit control. "He pointed out that I could not do much for the departed spirit, but that it could do much for me; that my worrying and fretting, or sorrowing, would only tend to hinder or delay her progress or advancement," King recorded. "He also advised me to take care of myself, told me that Hypatia, my spirit guide, was with her (May) and would speak with me."

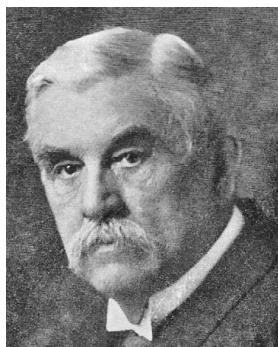
A deceased physician with whom King had previously been associated communicated briefly and then King's nephew, Jesse, spoke, mentioning that a living family member was disappointed that King had outlived his wife as he had expected "Auntie May" to leave him some money when she died. This and other family information mentioned by Jesse was especially evidential to King. Jesse further said that it might be too early for "Auntie May" to speak clearly or distinctly. However, with the help of Hypatia and Jesse, May was able to communicate, at first weakly. But her voice increased in volume and strength as she proceeded. "Johnnie! Oh Johnnie! My dear Johnnie! It is I. It's May! It's your 'Babe!' I am not dead, I am alive. I told you I would come if I could, and I am here." King pointed out that the names "Johnnie" and "Babe" were their own private pet names and known to no one else.

May mentioned that she could not have succeeded in communicating without the help of Hypatia and Jesse. She spoke with King for some 15 minutes about personal matters, including some jewelry and personal belonging of hers that King had put in a safe deposit box. King noted that he had placed the items in the box two days earlier

and considered May's reference to them being in the box as strong evidence. There was specific reference to one item and to specific relatives and friends. May asked that her thanks be given to one particular friend for assisting in preparing her body for burial, another very evidential item which King was certain the medium could not have known. "She talked as naturally about these things as she ever conversed with me in her home life, and she was always known as a shrewd business woman," King wrote.



May King



John King

In a second sitting with Wriedt, the following day, May again communicated. As a test, King asked her to tell Mrs. Wriedt what she gave him last Christmas. The voice coming through the trumpet said, "I had a grip made for the Doctor's instruments, and had his initials, J.S.K., printed in gold letters on the outside; and a Christmas card with printed greetings and written on by myself, which card I placed on the inside of the grip. He found it on the chair at breakfast time." King recorded that this was "absolutely correct."

King then left Mrs. Wriedt's home in Detroit and went to Toledo, Ohio that same day to sit with Joseph B. Jonson later in the evening. At Jonson's, King witnessed 19 separate materializations, including May, his brother, and his daughter. Two days later, King returned for two more sittings with Mrs. Wriedt. Again, May communicated and spoke in detail about private matters. But King was in for a big surprise this time as Martha, his first wife, who had died 37 years earlier, also communicated and discussed their children. May joined in the conversation.

In concluding his report on this series of séances with Wriedt and Jonson, King, who had studied hypnotism, ruled that out as a possibility and then asked if there is any trickster clever enough to duplicate the natural voice, facial expressions, and mannerisms of close friends and family relatives while also obtaining intimate personal knowledge. He further ruled out "mind reading" as some of the information communicated was unknown to him at the time but later verified. He felt certain he had not been deceived.


 A decorative header for the 'Book Reviews' section. It features a horizontal line with two bookshelves on either side. Each shelf holds several books of varying heights and colors (black, white, grey). The words 'Book Reviews' are centered in a serif font between the shelves.
 

## Book Reviews

**An Atheist in Heaven: The Ultimate Evidence for Life After Death?** By Paul J. Davids and Gary E. Schwartz, Ph.D. Contributions from John Allison, Ph.D., Yellow Hat Productions, Inc., 2016, 514 pages

Forrest J Ackerman was a Hollywood science fiction writer and editor who coined the term “sci fi,” and was renowned for his collection of sci fi, fantasy, and horror film memorabilia that filled his home, dubbed “the Ackermansion.” He was also known for his quirky sense of humor. Forry expressed a complete disbelief in the afterlife. Before he died on December 4, 2008, at age 92, he told one of his long-time fans and friends, Paul J. Davids, an author, artist, and award-winning Hollywood film director, that if he discovered that the afterlife exists, he would “drop a line” from the Other Side.

*An Atheist in Heaven* is the fascinating and convincing story of how Forry, as he was known, dropped more than a hundred lines to dozens of people alerting them to his post-death survival.

The event that set forces in motion occurred on March 18, 2009. It was, said Davids, “one of the most inexplicable events of my life.” Davids was alone at his vacation Santa Fe home. He sent a document to his office printer, and went off to a casino for dinner. He locked the house. When he returned, Davids took the document to his bedroom for review, set it down, and went into the bathroom for a few minutes. When he came out, he discovered that four words on the top page were mysteriously blotted out with what appeared to be a line of black ink, still fresh and wet. The inkblot was carefully executed in two strokes from left to right.

The four words blotted out proved to be a Forry-style coded message. What unfolded at a rapid rate were synchronicities, all pointing to apparent communications from Forry, that became increasingly difficult to explain away. They spread beyond Davids and his wife, Hollace, to friends and professional colleagues and contacts. Not all of the individuals had personally known Forry, but once involved in the case, they, too, experienced anomalies.

Many of the anomalies involved plays on words and puns—Forry favorites—as well as poltergeist phenomena, apports, and cell phone and computer phenomena. Davids kept meticulous written, photographic, and video records. He documents more

than 140 anomalies in the book.

The riddle of the inkblot was examined by Dr. John Allison, a chemistry professor and Director of Forensic Chemistry at The College of New Jersey. An acknowledged skeptic, Allison began experiencing odd phenomena. He conducted a thorough battery of tests and was unable to find a traditional explanation for the inkblot.

Davids’ search led him to afterlife researcher Dr. Gary E. Schwartz, professor of psychology, medicine, neurology, psychiatry, and surgery, and Director of the Laboratory for Advances in Consciousness and Health at the University of Arizona. Schwartz was initially skeptical, but concluded on the totality of observations and evidence that “Forry was likely doing his best to prove that he is still here.”

In late May 2015 Davids and Schwartz organized an investigation at the Ackermansion; participants include myself and my husband. The group experienced a variety of phenomena, such as shadow figures, apports, and a vibrating bed and sofa. The final séance drew the presences of Forry, Houdini, Lovecraft, and Tesla.

*An Atheist in Heaven* reads like a detective novel. We follow Davids in his quest for answers, and every chapter reveals yet a new track in the mystery. Allison contributes a detailed description of his inkblot forensics, and Schwartz discusses the scientific case for survival, and afterlife research, including the validity of mediumship and instrumental transcommunication (ITC) devices and methods. He describes his experiments to communicate directly with Forry via equipment, and his positive results.

Davids includes the views of Dr. Michael Shermer, executive director of the Skeptics Society and publisher of *Skeptic* magazine, who rejected the evidence for the survival of Ackerman. He did commend Davids for his “honest search and integrity.”

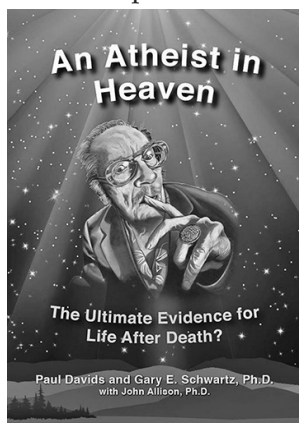
Schwartz’s comment was, “There isn’t one chance in a Godzillion that this isn’t true.”

Besides the evidence for afterlife communication, the book offers a rare glimpse into the personality and life of Ackerman. Davids includes many personal anecdotes, and provides more than 160 color photographs from Ackerman’s life and career, and of the research and the individuals who became involved in this amazing journey.

Davids comments, “...I am prepared to accept that those on the Other Side have essentially given me an assignment... to complete the task of getting this message out and completing both the video and written documentation of what really happened since Forry died.”

Davids featured Ackerman in his documentaries, *The Life After Death Project* and *The Life After Death Project 2 – Personal Encounters*.

— Rosemary Ellen Guiley



**The Hereafter Trilogy**, by Miles Edward Allen, Momentpoint Media, 2015, 428 pages

This book offers a summary of 69 of the most interesting, informative, and intriguing cases from the annals of psychical research and paranormal literature. It is divided into three volumes, the first two volumes being two of the author's prior books – *The Survival Files* (Volume I) and *The Afterlife Confirmed* (Volume II), which account for 53 of the cases. Volume III adds 16 cases (16 chapters) to the two other books, in some 78 pages of new material.

"The presentation of cases in *The Survival Files* (Volume I) began with those that showed the ability of the human personality to operate independently of the physical body," author Allen, a member of the Academy's board of directors, states, going on to explain that Volume II offers even more convincing evidence, while Volume III adds still more.

Volume III begins with a case entitled "An Untimely Valentine," which involves Bob and Phran Ginsberg, no doubt known to many Academy members as the founders of the Forever Family Foundation, and tells of their very evidential reading with medium Allison DuBois, a reading which inspired the formation of their organization.

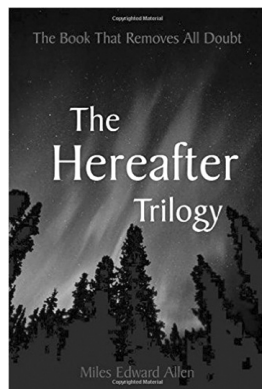
Another fairly recent case was reported by Academy member Tricia Robertson, a resident of Scotland. It is titled "A Tale of Two Tattoos" and involves Robertson's contact with a woman whose daughter had been murdered three months earlier. In taking a sealed envelope with some possessions of the murdered girl to a medium, Robertson received 22 bits of information about the girl and her murder, all of which were confirmed as true when she later spoke with the mother.

And there are many "classic" cases from yesteryear, including the group photo of Raymond Lodge – a photo never seen by Sir Oliver and Lady Lodge and one they first heard about when Raymond, who had been killed in Great War, told them about the photo through two different mediums, pointing out that the military officer behind him was resting his arm on his shoulder. The photo, as described by the discarnate Raymond, was later sent to the Lodges by the mother of another officer.

The "Widow's Mite" is another classic, involving a valuable lost coin that was misplaced by Dr. Isaac Funk, publisher of the Funk & Wagnalls standard dictionary that many of us grew up with. Spirit messages directed Funk to the coin, so that he could return it to the rightful owner.

This book should be on the nightstand of every open-minded skeptic in hospice care. If he or she were to read just one case a night before retiring, maybe a 10-minute read, that person should experience an awakening to a greater reality.

– Michael Tymn



**Real Visitors, Voices from Beyond, and Parallel Dimensions**, by Brad Steiger and Sherry Hansen Steiger, Visible Ink Press, 2016, 432 pages

Brad Steiger and Sherry Hansen Steiger are household names when it comes to the mysteries of the unknown, authoring between them more than 210 books over their long careers. *Real Visitors, Voices from Beyond, and Parallel Dimensions* is overall an engaging compendium of more than 200 stories and articles grouped by subject and indexed.

Readers who like broad-scope books will be pleased with the range of contents, which includes angels, demons, Jinn, nature spirits, fairies, ghosts, aliens, UFOs, alien abductions, hybrids, dreams, OBEs, channeling, time displacements, and more. The articles are generously illustrated with black-and-white photos and drawings.

In their introduction, the authors note that the various beings encountered by humans are collectively the Other, "which masks itself in physical forms that are more acceptable to human perception than its true image." These forms range from divine beings to tricksters to evil deceivers.

They devote special attention to the UFO/extraterrestrial field, explaining that "we remain convinced that the UFO Mystery somehow affects, interacts, and influences every aspect of human life, art, politics, science, religion, and our destiny as a species."

The Steigers have drawn the bulk of their content from their vast well of material collected and written in earlier years. There are fascinating accounts from experiencers and eyewitnesses, articles by experts, and commentaries from the author, who include some of their own experiences, and bring in aspects of nonlocal consciousness.

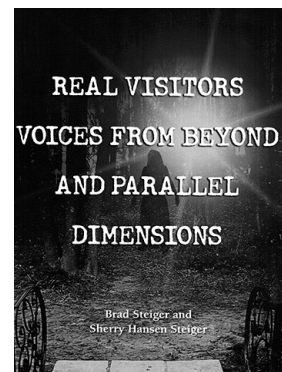
The book could have benefitted from more even updating, however. The Steigers have done limited updating themselves or through outside contributors. For example, they note the recent interest in Jinn, but ignore the Western literature published within the past five years. Instead, the topic is handled by an expert contributor in a single essay.

Likewise, there is no significant recent research on current topics such as Electronic Voice Phenomena, Instrumental Transcommunication, dream visits from the dead, crop circles, animal mutilations, near-death experiences, afterlife studies, or Bigfoot. The "Frozen Time" section discusses quantum physics, but omits M Theory and Quantum Hologram Theory.

Perhaps the uneven updating accounts for the lack of a bibliography, which should be extensive in a compendium. There is a short list of "further reading" titles, and citations included throughout the text.

Nonetheless, the book has great value for its collection of classic, historical material assembled under one cover.

– Rosemary Ellen Guiley



**Metaphysical Odyssey into the Mexican Revolution**, by C. M. Mayo, Dancing Chiva Literary Arts, Palo Alto, CA, 2014, 281 pages.

"Mediums, scoffed most scientists, were 'vulgar tricksters,' maestros of inflatable bladders, wire dummies, trick mirrors, and muslin painted with phosphorous to create the shiny extrusions of what Charles Richet termed 'ectoplasm'."

So author C. M. Mayo describes the era in which Francisco I. Madero, the protagonist in this fascinating book, found himself. Madero was the leader of Mexico's 1910 revolution and president of Mexico from 1911 to 1913. The son of a wealthy capitalist, Madero was educated by the Jesuits in Mexico and further studied in the United States and France. It was while in France that he was introduced to the writings of Alan Kardec and became a devout believer in Spiritism. After returning to his home in Mexico in 1893, "his every move was motivated by his Spiritism and even precise messages he received from the dead," Mayo offers, adding that modern history books gloss over or ignore Madero's association with Spiritism, "as it simply does not chime that an educated man could be sane and at the same time believe in tables rising from the floor without human agency or hearing messages from invisible entities."

While adding to his family's business empire in Mexico and building a personal fortune, Madero found time to study homeopathy and become a healing medium. He also developed the ability to do automatic writing, receiving messages from his brother, Raul, who had died as a child in 1887. He dedicated himself to charitable work and, along with his wife Sara, operated a soup kitchen.

According to Mayo, "many of Madero's followers never imagined that his beliefs were anything but a typical Mexican gentleman's Catholicism." He wrote his Spiritist articles under pseudonyms and otherwise exercised discretion in discussing his beliefs, which he summarized in one message: "We are not our physical body; we are spirits, and as such we are immortal and we are destined, lifetime by lifetime, not by any ritual intermediated by clerics, but by freely chosen good works, to evolve into ever higher levels of consciousness and so return to God."

Between 1904 and 1908, Madero became increasingly active in politics and began formulating a plan to become president and end the autocratic tyranny in Mexico, substituting a democratic rule for

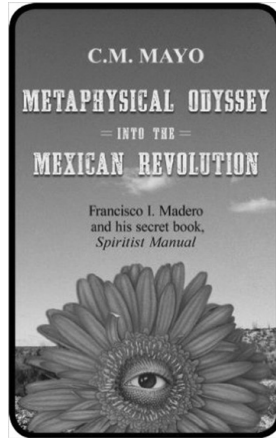
that of Porfirio Diaz, who had served as Mexico's president since 1876. Much of Madero's inspiration, according to Mayo's research, came from instructions from the spirit world, primarily from his deceased brother Raul and from a spirit giving the name Jose. His 1909 book, *La sucesión presidencial en 1910* (*The Presidential Succession in 1910*), the first step in his presidential campaign, was well received by the Mexican populace.

Before the book was published, however, Madero wrote to his father, seeking his approval to pursue the presidency. Addressing it, "Dear Daddy," he wrote: "Although you may be a convinced Spiritist, you have never studied it in more depth in order to discover the mysterious laws it reveals to us, or that we can discover through it. So: it is good that you know that among the spirits who populate space there is a group that is intensely concerned with the evolution of humanity, for its progress, and every time there is an important event in any part of the world, a large number of them incarnate in order to bring humanity forward, to save this or that people from the yoke of tyranny, or fanaticism, and to give them liberty, which is the most powerful means by which people can progress..."

After much struggle, Madero became president of Mexico on November 6, 1911, but his inability to meld democracy with old guard politics and the ambitions of various military leaders resulted in his assassination on February 22, 1913, believed to be at the direction of General Victoriano Huerta, who assumed the presidency. In spite of the fact that he served as president for only 15 months, Madero apparently was able to achieve certain reforms and is considered a hero to the Mexican people today, referred to as Mexico's "Apostle of Democracy."

After completing his first book, Madero was told by the spirit Jose, that he should write a second book, *Manual espirita* (*Spiritist Manual*), using the pseudonym Bhima, the name of a Hindu warrior in the Bhagavad-Gita. While the first 150 pages of this book set forth the history of Madero's life as thoroughly researched by the author, the last 130 or so pages provide the English translation of Madero's *Spiritist Manual*. It is divided into six chapters: an Overview of the Spiritist Doctrine; Historical Background; Spiritist Phenomena; Philosophy; Spiritist Morality; and Summary. Madero's approach is to explain everything with a question and answer. There are more than a hundred such questions and answers, ranging from *apparitions, apports, and astral projections, on through Buddha, clairvoyance, direct writing, evolution, faith, God, husband vs. wife duties, immortality, Jesus, Krishna, love, magnetism, Nicodemus, prayer, reincarnation, suffering, table tipping, universe, vanity, and on to wealth, will, and willpower.*

— Michael Tymn



**Life After Near Death**, by Debra Diamond,  
New Page Books, Wayne, NJ, 2015, 241 pages

Having read 50 or 60 books about near-death experiences since reading Dr. Raymond Moody's seminal work on the subject some 40 years ago, I doubted that I would find anything new in this book. However, I was wrong and pleasantly surprised. In addition to examining the after effects of a dozen interesting NDEs, author Debra Diamond, who claims clairvoyant and clairaudient abilities, offers comments from Spirit that came through as she was interviewing the experiencers.

As an example, a man named Lewis asked why he saw a white, male God during his NDE and not a Buddha or some other figure. "NDEs are administered by an authority figure in the experiencer's vernacular," was the response Diamond received. "One they can recognize and respect. For an elite, white male, who would that authority figure be but an Episcopal, white, male God? Someone of Lewis's world..." In another case, when a man named Ken wondered why he was given the choice to come back, it was explained that making the choice interactive causes the experiencer to own the outcome. "They must take responsibility for their lives going forward and live in accordance with the universe once the choice to return has been made," was the reply.

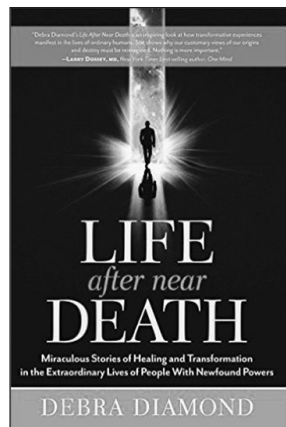
With an MBA from George Washington University, author Diamond is a former Wall Street investment professional and artist, also having served as a professor at Johns Hopkins University and a regular commentator on CNBC. She states that in 2008 she had a transformational experience that left her with clairvoyant and clairaudient abilities.

In all, Diamond interviewed about 50 experiencers over a three-year period, but narrowed it down to a dozen stories for the book, which is divided into five parts, covering Diamond's background, the stories of the NDEs, how the NDEs deal with the aftermath of the experience, an examination of more complex cases, and the implications of the NDE for the rest of us.

It is a very intriguing read. My only criticism is that some of the material in the Appendices, especially that describing how Diamond receives the messages, should have been set forth early in the book rather than at the end.

"The more digging I did and the more stories that others shared, the more the pieces fit together," Diamond ends the book. The book certainly helped me fit several pieces of the puzzle together.

— Michael Tymn



**Opening Heaven's Door** by Patricia Pearson,  
Atria Books, New York, 2014, 272 pages

"Father dead and sister dying, time to welcome portent and spirit, even while the doctor yacks on about the efficacy of the latest round of chemo," author Pearson introduces the subject matter of this book, referring to her experiences in dealing with the death of her father and sister. She tells of her sister's mystical experience on the night their father died and how her sister faced death of her own from breast cancer in 2008.

Pearson is identified as a journalist, novelist, and humorist whose work has appeared in the *New Yorker*, *New York Times*, *Business Week*, and other national publications. Moreover, she directed the research for the 2009 History Channel documentary *The Science of the Soul*. In this book, as the subtitle suggests, she investigates stories of life, death, and what comes after.

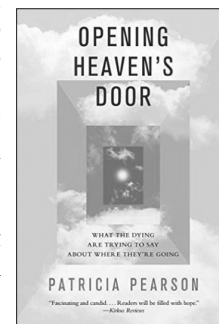
Searching for answers to her sister's experience, Pearson starts by researching the subject of "nearing death awareness" as discussed by popular authors such as Maggie Callanan, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, Dianne Arcangel, Karlis Osis, Erlendur Haraldsson and others, exploring the areas of deathbed visions, terminal restlessness, terminal lucidity, and other experiences of dying patients.

She moves on to "uncanny" experiences at the moment of death, including the phenomenon of others sensing the death of a loved one at some distance and others seeing recently deceased loved ones shortly after they have died. "Dismissing these experiences as wishful imaginings of events after the fact ignores their intensity, clarity, and power to unsettle," Pearson offers.

Much of the focus of this book is on the out-of-body and near-death experience, including those reported by Carl Jung, Eben Alexander, Nancy Evans Bush, Alan Ross Hugenot, Pam Reynolds and Yvonne Kason. She quotes well-known researchers and authors such as Raymond Moody, Diane Corcoran, Bruce Greyson and Sam Parnia, sometimes interviewing them rather than just drawing from their published works. She offers the skeptical views of Susan Blackmore and Keith Augustine.

Being very familiar with the subject matter and the various stories and research mentioned in the book, I didn't find much, if anything, new in this book, but I doubt that Pearson intended it for me and others who have read extensively in the areas covered. The book would be an excellent introduction for those who are not very familiar with the material discussed. Pearson does a good job in weaving it all together.

— Michael Tymn



Letter to the Editor**Another Look at the Silver Cord**

In the February 2016 issue of *The Searchlight*, Karen Herrick identifies the spiritual silver cord with the vagus nerve. As her article points out, others have suggested such a relationship before her. That such a silver cord exists in the visions associated with OBEs and NDEs is not in doubt. However, it is a spiritual entity and cannot, in my opinion, be equated with a physical entity such as the vagus nerve. To equate the two is what the Oxford philosopher Gilbert Ryle described as a category mistake – regarding two things as identical which belong to different categories of material, one physical, the other spiritual.

It seems quite possible that the silver cord serves in earthly life as a channel of communication between the spiritual domain and the soul within the physical body, quite possibly influencing the whole body through spiritual as well as electromagnetic transmission along the vagal nerve.

– Howard A. Jones

**New Book Review Editor**

Rosemary Ellen Guiley is the Academy's new book review editor. A researcher, author and investigator in the paranormal and metaphysical fields, Rosemary has written more than 60 books on such topic as hauntings, entity contact experiences, afterlife studies, spirit communication, dreams, angels, and psychic/spiritual development. She also is a past-life regressionist, dreamwork facilitator, and psychic consultant, and teaches black mirror scrying (psychomanteum). Rosemary serves on the board of directors of the Dr. Edgar Mitchell Foundation for Research into Extraterrestrial Encounters, and is co-host of *A New World Awakening* radio show. She presents internationally and is a frequent guest on *Coast to Coast AM* with George Noory.



Academy members are invited to review books for the *Journal* and *The Searchlight*, but they should query Rosemary first to avoid duplication and to check on guidelines and deadlines. Rosemary can be contacted at reguiley@gmail.com.

**ASCS 2016 Conferences**

**June 8 – 12**  
**Chapel Hill, NC**

**Nov. 30 – Dec. 4**  
**Scottsdale, AZ**

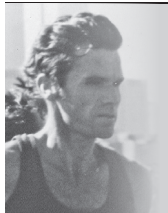
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# Practicing Death

*To practice death is to practice freedom — Michel de Montaigne*

*Michael Tymn*



## Clairvoyant or Medium?

At a conference some years ago, I met a woman who claimed clairvoyant abilities and called herself a medium but who believed that most of the mediums of yesteryear – the trance-voice mediums, the direct-voice mediums, and the materialization mediums – were all fakes. “Well I’m a medium and I can’t do any of those things,” was her rationale.

I pointed out that Leonora Piper, probably the most tested trance-voice medium ever, didn’t have the ability to do the direct-voice or to produce materializations, and that Eusapia Palladino, another much-studied medium of a century or more ago, produced mostly physical mediumship and little or no mental phenomena. It became increasingly obvious to me that this clairvoyant knew next to nothing about other types of mediumship. She knew only what she was capable of doing and assumed her ability defined mediumship.

It might have surprised this clairvoyant if I had told her that by at least one reference those with clairvoyant ability do not qualify as mediums. “The gifts of clairvoyance and clairsentience do indeed enable the spirit of a man to see and hear the spirits about him, but a clairvoyant is not an instrument of these spirits and should therefore not be classed as a medium,” are the words Johannes Greber recorded as coming from a supposedly advanced spirit through a young trance medium.

Greber (1874 – 1944) was a Catholic priest serving a parish in rural Germany when he discovered a peasant boy in his parish with trance-mediumship ability. He began receiving very profound messages through this medium – messages clearly far beyond the education, maturity, and knowledge of this young boy. They so changed Greber’s outlook on spirituality that he left the Church and began his own church, focused on healing. His 1932 book, *Communication with the Spirit World of God*, sets forth answers to the many mysteries of life as explained to him by spirits through several trance mediums.

As it was explained to Greber, a true medium enters the trance state and his or her spirit completely vacates the body – held to it only by a band of od – and is displaced by a discarnate entity who communicates directly with the sitter or relays messages from another discarnate in the spirit world. “Through this band of od the medium’s body re-

ceives enough vitality from the spirit to keep its organs functioning,” it was explained. “It is along this band of od also that the spirit finds its way back into the body of the medium.” (See May Journal article by Robert Landro concerning od and odic force.)



*Greber*

Such displacement does not take place with the clairvoyant, however. To put it another way, there is no possession of the clairvoyant’s body by a discarnate spirit. “The spirit of a person endowed with clairvoyance, clairsentience and with supernatural powers of feeling, smelling, and tasting, owes these faculties exclusively to the fact that it can detach itself from the body to a greater or less degree,” Greber recorded in shorthand. “A spirit so detached and partly withdrawn from the body thereby becomes independent of the latter’s physical sense of perception and assumes the faculties and properties of a discarnate spirit, seeing, hearing, and feeling after the manner of a ultra-mundane spirits, according to the extent to which it is detached and according to the purity of the od surrounding it.”

“The many mistakes made by your clairvoyants in their statements are explained by the fact that with most of them the faculty is present in a very imperfect state only,” Greber further recorded, also noting that the prophet Elijah had the gift of clairvoyance, as did the patriarch Jacob, King David, and the apostle Paul.

Whether clairvoyants are “mediums,” or “psychics” or “psychic mediums,” as some call themselves, or “sensitives,” seems to be a matter of semantics. Call them what you will.

And whether Greber got the straight scoop or not, I don’t know, but it does make sense to me. The research carried out with Leonora Piper certainly suggested that her spirit was leaving her body and that her “spirit control” was taking charge of it, even if some researchers preferred to see it as a “dream personality” buried in her subconscious taking over.



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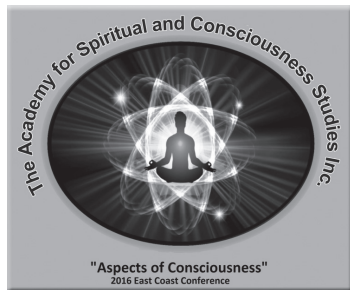
#### MISSION STATEMENT:

The mission of The Academy for Spiritual and Consciousness Studies, Inc. is to discern, develop and disseminate knowledge of how consciousness studies and paranormal phenomena may relate to and enhance the development of the human spirit.

## Academy Conference: "Aspects of Consciousness"

The Academy's 41st annual conference, scheduled for June 8-12, will feature an all-star lineup of more than 20 speakers under the umbrella topic, "Aspects of Consciousness."

The conference will take place at the Sheraton Chapel Hill in North Carolina beginning at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, June 8, and concluding at 1 p.m. on Sunday, June 12.



There are four conference themes:

\* **Spiritual Mysticism and the Spiritual Transformative Experience:** This topic examines the mystical attributes of enlightened individuals of many religions and the profound spiritual awakening experiences encountered by many people today.

\* **After-Death Experience and the Survival of Consciousness:** These speakers address research and experiences of individuals who have had near-death experiences or communication with deceased

loved ones.

\* **Mind/Body Medicine – An Integrative Approach:** Complementary and alternative medicine is addressed with a focus on the integration with conventional medicine and evidence-based research.

\* **Physics of Consciousness:** A look at the "Quantum Mind" and "Theories of Consciousness," examining that mysterious force that makes all those neurons and synapses "tick."

The keynote and plenary speakers are Vernon Neppe, M.D., Ph.D., Suzanne Giesemann, M.A., Claude Swanson, Ph.D., Edward Close, Ph.D., and Lee Lawrence, CPA.

Special ASCSI hotel room rates of \$99 per night, single or double, are available. For more information and registration, visit the Academy's website at [ascsi.org](http://ascsi.org).



*Neppe*



*Giesemann*